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Editorial

## These Cancer Suits Are an Absurdity

Since medical fingers have been pointed accusingly at cigarettes in lung cancer cases, there has been a small stampede of victims toward the courts, filing damage suits against the tobacco companies for the injuries they allegedly suffered because they smoked the companies' products.

The first of these cases that actually came to trial was thrown out by a Federal judge in May. Another has just been decided in favor of the

company. But the key question of whether the company can be held liable, in view of what is now known or suspected about the relation of cigarettes to cancer, apparently was left unsettled.

It seems to us that the sooner this is finally and decisively settled in the companies' favor, the better. We are not pro-cancer, and certainly there ought to be full public disclosure of all that can be learned about the

effects of smoking and no relaxing at rigid policing of advertising claims. But tobacco companies merely provide the products that meet a public demand. The decision whether or not to use these products is, as it should be, an individual one for which the individual is and should be responsible.

*It makes about as much sense to let cancer victims sue tobacco companies as it would to let alcoholics sue distillers, or to let people dying of the results of gluttony sue their grocers.*

There's too much of a tendency these days to try to fob off responsibility for our individual acts, to profiteer in the damage courts, to count insurance companies as fair game. And this is a sickness more pernicious than cancer.

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